SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

The Independent Bulletin of Science Policy

Vol. VI, No. 3 | P.O. Box 6226A, Washington, D.C. 20015 | February 15, 1976

New White House Science Office—Stalled Again

A compromise bill establishing a White House Office of Science, Engineering, and Technology Policy (OSETP) was quickly passed by the Senate February 4, but sponsors of a House-passed parallel measure have responded cautiously to the Senate version. As a result, the two-year effort to undo President Nixon's demolition of White House-based science advice is once again beset by uncertainty, and the suspicion arises that some Senate leaders would not object to putting the issue on ice until after the presidential election.

Meanwhile, Senator William Proxmire (D-Wisc.) has traced the geographic locales of members of two advisory groups that the White House appointed to prepare the way for the OSETP (SGR Vol. V, No. 22), and has declared that "The incestuous nature of the higher echelons of the scientific community has never been clearer." Since Proxmire chairs the appropriations subcommittee which provides money for the National Science Foundation—administrative homebase for the advisory groups—his views are not peripheral to the future of the OSETP.

Genetic-Research Control—Report on NIH Meeting: page 6

"More than 90 per cent (28 out of 31) of the members of the two groups come from states on either the East or West Coast, " the Senator stated in a press release, adding that more than half come from California and Massachusetts, and that the combined groups include only one woman and no blacks. "This archaic 'old boys club' approach to the selection of important advisory groups must end," he stated.

As for the legislative status of the proposed office, the situation is this: The House version, written by the Science and Technology Committee in close collaboration with the White House, gives the President wide lattitude to determine the authority and responsibilities of the OSETP and its director. The rationale for this is that the President should be free to work out his own staff arrangements.

Senator Kennedy, however, has long been plugging—perhaps unrealistically—for a bill that would make the new office a major power center in the White House staff hierarchy. Thus, Kennedy took the position that the OSETP director should be a member of the National Security Council and the Domestic Council. In addition, Kennedy sought to give Congress a handle on the office by requiring the OSETP to publish an annual report—a well-established device for legislative probing into the affairs of an executive agency.

Following passage of the House version last November, the Administration strongly indicated that it would not accept the Kennedy formula, and the Senator dropped the Security Council membership requirement as well as some other provisions. However, substantial differences still exist between the bills passed by the two chambers. The Senate version retains membership on the Domestic Council, makes the director an adviser to the Security Council, and gives the OSETP a major advisory role in budget matters. It also requires an annual report, in contrast to the House version, which calls for periodic reports. In addition, the Senate bill would provide each state with a one-time $200,000 fund to plan science advisory activities—a measure that runs counter to the Administration's preference for revenue sharing on a non-categorical basis.

Kennedy, who is the dominant figure in the Senate's

(Continued on Page 2)

In Brief

Response of an Administration official to an SGR inquiry concerning the directorship of the National Bureau of Standards, vacant since last June: "Hasn't that damn thing been filled yet?"

Some of the loudest support for the Congressional reversal of Ford's HEW appropriations veto come from an outfit called Friends of Eye Research and Treatment, which was recently established by persons associated with Boston's Eye Research Institute of Retina Foundation. "Friends" sent out 15,000 model letters which recipients were asked to copy and send to Congress. Various sight-related organizations sent out thousands more.

Roger J. Bulger, executive officer of the Institute of Medicine since its founding in 1972, has been appointed dean of the University of Massachusetts Medical School at Worcester.

The Center for Population Research of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has awarded a $1.4-million contract to the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center of Los Angeles for a 3-year study of "natural family planning." An NICHD announcement quotes a medical center official as saying the study reflects concern about the side effects of oral contraceptives and intrauterine devices.

NSF Faces New Attack on Grant Process

The National Science Foundation's chief tormentor in the House, Rep. John B. Conlan (R-Ariz.), has fired off yet another broadside in the pages of the *Congressional Record,* accusing NSF officials of deliberately misusing the peer review process to push their favorite programs, and accusing the NSF's top management of "an apparent willful attempt to cover up the facts."

Though Conlan has raised similar charges in the past, and this attack raises no new issues, it is important to examine the basis of his complaints since he has already signalled his desire to cut NSF's budget and radically overhaul its peer review process. The charges he has levelled in his latest assault are likely to form the basis of his campaign in the coming months.

The focus of Conlan's complaints is the process through which NSF funded a school science curriculum development program known as the Individualized Science Instruction System (ISIS), a broad science course for 10th and 11th graders which Conlan has repeatedly attacked as being too explicit and "value laden" in its treatment of social science issues.

The basis of his latest charges is a report issued last month by the General Accounting Office (GAO), which examined the NSF's handling of the original grant application for ISIS and its handling of a later application for continuation of funding for the project.

According to the GAO report, the proposal was sent to 11 scientists to review and, on the basis of their comments, the NSF project manager prepared a memorandum recommending that the course be funded. The memorandum and verbatim copies of all the reviewers' comments were passed on to other NSF officials and to the National Science Board for approval of the ISIS grant.

According to GAO, the memorandum "was not a totally complete and accurate representation of peer reviewers' comments . . . since it quoted only favorable comments and did not discuss many of the concerns raised by peer reviewers."

In particular, GAO concluded that although 28 of the 33 comments "accurately represented the thoughts expressed by the respective reviewers," five of the quotes were taken out of context and gave an inaccurate representation of the reviewers' feelings.

Conlan, who is no laggard when it comes to gleaning maximum political capital from criticisms of NSF, immediately concluded that the peer review process had been "seriously misused." He is particularly miffed because NSF officials had refused for months to provide him with copies of the peer review reports — a refusal which, he argues, makes it impossible for him to carry out his legislative oversight of NSF, and which was an attempt to cover up the alleged misuse of the peer review process.

Conlan neglected to highlight two other facts brought out by the GAO, however. First, the memorandum explicitly stated that all the reviewers raised "questions on aspects of the proposal plan," and second, NSF officials took up the questioning with the grant applicant, and were satisfied with his response to them.

The GAO study also takes issue with the statement in the memorandum that all the reviewers recommended that the proposal be funded. GAO says that although all reviewers suggested that the concept embodied in the ISIS proposal was timely, three of the eleven didn't explicitly recommend funding ISIS.

Though the GAO study certainly indicates that there has been some laxity within NSF's education directorate in handling peer review reports, it is difficult to conclude that NSF made the wrong funding decision on the ISIS proposal. Eight out of eleven reviewers recommended that the proposal be supported and,

(Continued on Page 3)

WHITE HOUSE *(Continued from Page 1)*

handling of the legislation, describes the bill as a compromise that, in his view, goes a long way toward meeting the Administration's objections. However, following passage by the Senate, the Administration signalled the House that it still regarded the Senate version as unacceptable. House and Senate staff members concerned with the OSTEP had earlier agreed to meet and work out the differences between the measures as soon as the Senate completed action. But when that action finally came, the House side indicated that it wanted more time to think it over. At this writing, neither side has appointed conferees to work on a final bill.

The Senate leaders say they are ready to move as soon as the House takes the necessary procedural steps, but without saying anything explicit, some of them convey the impression that they would not mind a deadlock that would sidetrack the bill for the remainder of this Congress. Since everyone involved is committed to the restoration of a White House science office, all parties to the matter are seeking to compile a blame-free record. However, on the Senate side, there is a considerable amount of ill-feeling about the Administration's tactics and the House committee's willingness to comform to White House desires. And if there is a way to scuttle the bill with honor, it might just be done.—DSG

Plans Proceeding for "Science Court" Experiment

With over a score of influential supporters in and out of government, plans are going ahead in Washington to try out the "science court" proposal that Arthur Kantrowitz, founder and chairman of the Avco Everett Research Laboratory, has been plugging for over a decade.

Conceived of as a device to ascertain the scientific and technical "facts" in public-policy controversies—such as nuclear safety, ozone depletion, and food additive hazards—the Court would have no legal powers; rather, it would rely on the thoroughness and quality of its deliberations to acquire influence and command respect. The idea, of course, possesses a gimmicky quality that suggests great naivete about the federal regulatory process, to which the court's "jurisdiction" would be confined.

Kantrowitz, however, has been diligent in his missionary efforts, and an experimental trial of his proposal has been endorsed by the two advisory groups that were set up last year to make plans for the restoration of a White House science office (SGR Vol. V, No. 22). Planning, still in the early stages, has been assigned to a task force that consists of Kantrowitz; Donald Kennedy, professor of biological sciences, Stanford University, and Frederick Seitz, president of Rockefeller University.

Kantrowitz says that sympathetic interest and support are widespread, and he numbers among the "true believers" Richard Simpson and Lawrence Kushner, chairman and vice chairman, respectively, of the Consumer Product Safety Commission; Betsy Ancker-Johnson, assistant secretary of Commerce for science and technology; Myron Tribus, director of the Center for Advanced Engineering, MIT, and William P. Kavanaugh, of the American Society for Testing and Materials.

Without any firm conclusions being arrived at, the court idea was discussed February 9 at an all-day meeting at the National Science Foundation. Among those attending were Kantrowitz, Johnson, Kavanaugh, Seitz, and Simpson. Also, David Rall, director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Science; James Peters, of the National Cancer Institute; David Beckler, of the National Academy of Sciences; Russell Drew and Edward Berger, of the National Science Foundation, and James Turner, a public interest lawyer and author of the anti-pesticide book, "The Chemical Feast."

The meeting ranged over a variety of subjects, including possible sources of financial support for the court, topics to be considered, and methods for selecting the judges. Another meeting was scheduled for March 5.

As explained by Kantrowitz in an article in the September-October 1975 *American Scientist*, the fundamental concept of the "science court" is that "The separation of scientific from non-scientific components of a mixed decision (one involving public policy and technical considerations) . . . can always be made . . . If the making of mixed decisions is meticulously separated into scientific and non-scientific parts, then a system can be devised by which experts can make objective judgments regarding the scientific parts of the question, leaving the determination of what is good and what is evil to the democratic process."

The court would consist of a scientific judge and associate judges chosen on the basis of professional qualifications and previous lack of close involvement with the particular issue before them. Parties to the controversy would certify their confidence in the judges prior to the trial. The arguments would be presented by advocates or "case managers." The proceedings would be in public and would include cross-examinations of conflicting experts.

NSF *(Continued from Page 2)*

Conlan's own views notwithstanding, all eleven approved the concept.

The entire question of the adequacy of NSF's review procedures is about to come to the fore again, since the House Committee on Science and Technology is nearing completion of its analysis of some 4500 questionnaires which were sent to NSF grant applicants and reviewers to assess their views on the peer review process.

(The report, No. B-133183, is available from GAO, Washington DC. 20548, for $1.)

Science & Government Report © 1976

Contributing Editors
Colin Norman, Pamela Moore

Editor and Publisher
Daniel S. Greenberg

Circulation Manager
Alice Anne Freund

Independently published by *Science & Government Report*, Inc., twice monthly, except once each in January, July and August. Annual subscription: Institutions, $65 (two years, $120); individuals, $44 (two years, $75). Editorial offices at 3736 Kanawha St., N.W., Washington, DC 20015. Tel. (202) 244-4135. Second class postage paid at Washington, DC. Please address all subscription correspondence to Box 6226A, Northwest Station, Washington, DC 20015. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. SGR is available on Xerox University Microfilms.

"Follow Through"—Biggest Social Science Study Ever . . .

The biggest social science experiment ever carried out in this country — an eight-year, multimillion dollar follow-up to the well-known Head Start program—has been graded a big botch by the General Accounting Office, but an interesting one from which GAO says a good deal can be learned.

Known as Follow Through, the "experiment" began in 1968 as a scaled-down version of what was originally intended to be a far-reaching educational program for kindergarten through third-grade children. Some $120 million had been requested for the program, but when the fiscal strains of the Vietnam War interfered, only $15 million was made available for two years, and Follow Through's planners decided to emphasize experimentation rather than educational service.

The result, according to a recent GAO report, was an experiment superimposed on an existing service

Social Science Report

program which, despite reams of data, has failed to provide statistically reliable answers to educational questions. It is important to note that GAO does not criticize the diverse instructional and social services delivered to students and their parents. It simply says that because Follow Through was flawed as an experiment, it is difficult to tell if the program succeeded, and, if so, how.

Nevertheless, GAO states that the program's history is so rich in problems that it offers a good opportunity to teach federal program administrators, the social research and evaluation community and legislators important lessons in large-scale social experiments. The major lesson, it says, is that service, research and evaluation components of programs should be planned in tandem, with goals and research questions clearly spelled out in advance. The reverse was true for Follow Through.

Initially, the primary focus of the program was the repeated finding that the advances made by children in Head Start programs washed out after the child attended regular public school classes for a year of two. Thus, when Follow Through was authorized in the 1967 Economic Opportunity Act amendments, the goal was to try to sustain those gains. The Office of Economic Opportunity delegated administrative responsibility to the Office of Education, which was to take applications from local educational agencies to establish projects. But, when the first appropriation request fell through, an experimental approach was adopted to go along with the shrunken budget.

As GAO put it, "Follow Through became an experimental program in a service setting." The heart of the new approach was a "planned variation" strategy and a continuous national evaluation to see how Follow Through children compared with non-Follow Through pupils and to test the relative efficacy of varied educational techniques.

Planned variation was based on systematically applying different educational approaches developed by academic experts, each of whom was to become a "sponsor" of a single type of program — from highly structured classroom models, sometimes called "pricklies," to open classrooms and more exploratory environments, dubbed "gooeys." Sponsors were responsible for implementing a particular type of Follow Through classroom, for designing curriculum materials, providing teacher training and working with parents. The evaluation, on the other hand, was to be conducted largely off site by a number of independent research organizations using test scores and other data.

However, because of the ill-planned switch to experiment status, GAO states that implementation and evaluation flopped. The major problems, in experimental terms, says GAO, were "lack of random assignment of local educational agencies to sponsors," and "lack of comparable control groups," problems from which the experiment never recovered.

Most of the project sites of one sponsor wound up in the South, while most of another were located in another region. Some sponsors' approaches were tested largely in urban settings, while others sprouted in rural settings. Some sponsors' pupils were mostly white, some mostly black. The number of sites was not equally divided among sponsors. Some were running projects at as many as 20 sites, and others had less than five.

Comparisons of Follow Through and non-Follow Through programs were rendered difficult or impossible by the actual workings of the program. Within the same schools, it was sometimes found that all classes within a grade level were using Follow Through equipment, and

(Continued on Page 5)

Science Study Group Seeks Members

Applications for membership are invited by the recently established Society for Social Studies of Science. An announcement from the Society says that "members are scholars chiefly from such disciplines as anthropology, economics, history, information science, philosophy, political science, psychology, research administration, science policy studies, and sociology." Robert K. Merton, of Columbia University, is president of the Society. Applications can be obtained from Robert McGinnis, 323 Uris Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

. . . Botched But Valuable, According to GAO Report

(Continued from Page 4)

often the non-Follow Through faculty attended the sponsor's workshops. At some sites Follow Through served all eligible children, so comparison children were sought in nearby districts; or, as often as not, a more advantaged socio-economic group within the site was selected. Even when good comparison groups were found, comparison children often were the beneficiaries of specialized programs funded under other compensatory education efforts.

Despite the difficulties, in school year 1968-69, there were about 103 projects serving 15,500 children distributed among 14 sponsors with more to come, and "the largest, most expensive social experiment ever launched was essentially in place."

In addition, the evaluation had other troubles. GAO states that not the least of them appears to have been the failure of program officials and sponsors to be specific about what they wanted the program to accomplish. The report cites lack of a detailed plan of what sponsors were to produce or specific goals by which projects could be assessed. A politicized OE undergoing personnel changes did not help. GAO says that not until July 1972, did OE tell sponsors to make their objectives explicit and "to devise evaluation plans for those objectives not covered in the national evaluation."

The evaluation was confounded by other factors, including inexperience. Sponsors often disagreed with the items to be measured or the instruments selected to measure them. Some complained that the effects of their approaches would not translate automatically into achievement gains measured by standardized tests, or gains would not show up until after the pupils had left Follow Through.

Nevertheless, GAO states that some unsophisticated, fundamental steps could have increased the usefulness of Follow Through, which, it says, spent more than $23 million for evaluation contracts as of July 1974, a fraction of the estimated $300 million spent on the program through school year 1973-74. Listing those steps in recommendations, GAO urged HEW to develop "greater safeguards to insure that future experimental programs are not designed apart from evaluation to maximize the degree to which experimental results will be statistically reliable." It also suggested that HEW translate the problems encountered during the Follow Through experiment into criteria for designing and administering future experiments, including, among other things, criteria to prevent collecting massive data on program results before program goals and objectives are properly defined.

And, as if to leave nothing to chance, GAO advised: "In the future, experiments generally should be designed on a small scale and have a limited number of projects to define implementation procedures and program objectives and goals."

"After development," it suggested, "the program can be expanded to more projects, if necessary, to assess its effects."—PM

(The report, *Follow Through: Lessons Learned From its Evaluation and Need to Improve its Administration,* is available from GAO, Distribution Section, Rm. 4522, 441 G St. NW, Washington, DC 20548. It is free to libraries, faculty, students and non-profit organizations.)

NBS Anniversary Lectures

With Edward Teller as the leadoff speaker, the National Bureau of Standards will observe its 75th anniversary with a series of public lectures starting next month on "the current state and future of science and technology in America." The lectures, open to the public without fee, will be held at the Bureau's Gaithersburg, Md., headquarters as part of a nearly year-long series of events in connection with the anniversary. The lecture schedule is as follows:

Thursday, March 11
- 9:30 a.m. Edward Teller, Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, "Science and Technology in America"
- 11:15 a.m. Norman Ramsey, Harvard University, "Quantum Science and Its Impact on Metrology"

Friday, March 19
- 9:30 a.m. William O. Baker, Bell Telephone Laboratories, "Materials"
- 11:15 a.m. Henry Eyring, University of Utah, "Chemistry—A Changing Frontier"

Friday, March 26
- 9:30 a.m. Garrett Birkhoff, Harvard University, "Applied Mathematics and Its Future"
- 11:15 a.m. Alan Perlis, Yale University, "Computers in Science and Technology"

Friday, April 2
- 9:30 a.m. Robert C. Seamans, Jr., Energy Research and Development Administration, "Technology of Energy"
- 11:30 a.m. Simon Ramo, TRW Corporation, "The Future Role of Engineering"

For a complete schedule of the Bureau's anniversary program, contact Madeleine Jacobs, Office of Information Activities, National Bureau of Standards, Washington, DC 20234; telephone (202) 921-3181.

NIH Moving to Decision on Genetic-Research Rules

The much-publicized, painful attempts by scientists to establish controls over the use of a revolutionary but potentially hazardous technique for manipulating genes has entered a significant new phase. For the past 18 months, scientists themselves have been struggling to write regulations governing the technique, many uses of which have been placed under a voluntary embargo. Last week the process was opened up to participation from the public.

The forum was a special meeting of a top-level NIH advisory committee, which met for two days to discuss the adequacy of proposed controls on the research, and to receive formal evidence from outside witnesses.

Though the result was a rather confused, inconclusive debate, the meeting itself could turn out to be politically significant, for it will probably help prevent the issue from being controlled by legislation or other means.

The technique essentially involves the use of a newly discovered class of enzymes to rearrange genes in combinations which are unlikely to have occurred by natural evolution. Its utility is that it enables genes to be taken from virtually any organism and inserted into a virus or bacterium so that they will be copied by the reproductive machinery of the host.

The procedure has been described as a revolutionary tool in molecular biology, since it could lead to advances in understanding how genes work. More distantly, it holds promise for medical therapy. But it also involves the potential risk that organisms bearing transplanted genes could be unpredictably hazardous, so that, in the worst imaginable case, an uncontrollable epidemic could be let loose.

It was such speculative risks that led to the tortuous process through which scientists have been attempting to set controls on the technique. The process, in short, began in July, 1974, when a committee of the National Academy of Sciences issued a call for a voluntary moratorium on some uses of the technique until the hazards have been evaluated. That was followed a year ago by a meeting of geneticists held in Asilomar, California, which drafted a set of guidelines under which most planned experiments could be resumed.

Since that meeting, an NIH committee has been attempting to draft regulations from the Asilomar guidelines. After intensive debate and much confusion, the committee managed to draft proposed regulations last December (SGR Vol. V, No. 22). It was those proposals which were at issue during last week's gathering at NIH.

The meeting was called by NIH Director Donald Fredrickson, who holds responsibility for deciding whether the proposed regulations are acceptable, and if so, how they should be implemented. Until last week, the entire process had been carried out almost solely by scientists, and for that reason it had attracted some criticism. Senator Edward Kennedy, for one, has said that such matters are much too important to be left exclusively to scientists.

Thus, Fredrickson's decision to open the matter up to public debate last week was not only sound democratic policy, but also politically astute, since it will certainly blunt such criticisms. The process Fredrickson chose for obtaining public input was to call a special meeting of the Advisory Committee to the NIH Director, a top-level policy committee which consists of scientists, lawyers and lay members, and to throw the meeting open to outside witnesses.

Not surprisingly, the comments ranged from support for the proposed regulations to opposition from those who thought them too strict and others who thought

(Continued on Page 7)

In Quotes

The following excerpt is from a paper, "Studies of Impacts of Federal Health-Related Research Expenditures Upon Institutions of Higher Education," submitted to the President's Biomedical Research Panel by the American Council on Education, the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the RAND Corporation:

The government retrieves vast quantities of data each year from the nation's universities for research purposes. Yet, when a study like this is to be conducted, information from separate agencies must be combined in a process which turns out to be quite difficult. It has been our observation that the data assembled by the different agencies vary considerably in their quality, that some are of relatively poor quality and that relatively little thought has been given to the process of merging these separate files for policy analysis. Thus, when meaningful questions are to be asked of the data, one discovers that two agencies have dealt with branch campuses differently, that disciplines and professional fields are defined inconsistently, etc. This substantially impedes the research process and greatly reduces the value of these data to policymakers. In our judgment, wiser interagency planning could reduce the number of requests for data to universities while greatly increasing the potential value of the data which are collected.

DoD Drops Request for New Gas Weapon Production

For the first time in three years, the budget requested by the Department of Defense contains no money for production of the chemical weapons known as binaries. Congress had turned down two previous requests for such funds, and the Army consequently decided to shift the emphasis of its chemical weapons program, by requesting instead a massive boost in funds for defensive equipment.

The Army has not entirely abandoned its interest in binaries, however, for the FY1977 budget request includes some $6 million for R&D on the weapons, including a slice of money for research on a chemical bomb called "Bigeye."

For more than a decade, the Army has been carrying out an R&D program on binaries, which consists of two non-lethal chemicals which form a deadly agent when mixed together. Two years ago, it requested funds to begin setting up production facilities for a special 155mm shell to carry the chemicals.

The Army was planning to replace its present extensive stockpiles of lethal chemical weapons with binaries, and attempting to justify the program on the basis that the new weapons would be much safer to store and transport. Congress turned down the request, however, chiefly because a massive new chemical weapons program would jeopardize international chemical disarmament negotiations, and partly because private estimates put the total cost of the effort at about $1 billion.

Having failed to persuade Congress of the need to launch a massive new chemical weapons program, the Army has now decided to upgrade its defensive equipment substantially. According to the Defense posture statement presented by Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to the House Armed Services Committee earlier this month, the request for procurement of new warning and protective equipment in the FY 1977 budget is $74 million, up from about $9 million.

GENETICS *(Continued from Page 6)*

them too lax. No consensus was reached — indeed, none was anticipated — and Fredrickson has asked each member of his committee to send comments as soon as possible. He will come to his own decision in the next few weeks, and will probably suggest changes in the proposed regulations, before the committee which drafted them meets early in April. The drafting process therefore clearly has not finished, though it is entering its final stages.

The issue facing Fredrickson was neatly summed up last week by Deputy NIH Director DeWitt Stetten, who observed that the problem in devising regulations is to "balance hypothetical problems against speculative benefits."

The proposed regulations are at least as strict as the guidelines proposed at the Asilomar Conference, and according to Paul Berg, who chaired the committee which issued the first call for a moratorium on the technique, "My own personal view is that they are stricter than necessary to protect public health." Donald Brown, a researcher at the Carnegie Institution who has been using the technique, claimed that they are so strict as to be irrational; some other witnesses suggested that they will severly impede the progress of research.

On the other hand, fears were expressed, notably from a group of radical scientists from Boston, that the proposals would lead to a rapid proliferation of the research and they urged that its use be put off at least until the risks have been more accurately assessed.

For political reasons, it would be very difficult for Fredrickson to suggest that the regulations should be relaxed — such a move would be seen as self-serving and probably lead to some Congressional inquiries. It is therefore likely that he will suggest some relatively minor tightening. In particular, he is expected to ask the drafting committee to give some more thought to how the regulations should be implemented and enforced.

—CN

Subscription Form

Science & Government Report
Northwest Station
Box 6226A
Washington, D.C. 20015

☐ Renew my subscription ☐ Check enclosed

☐ Enter my subscription ☐ Please bill

Institutional subscribers: one year, $65☐ ; two years, $120☐

Individual subscribers: one year, $44☐ ; two years, $75☐

(Overseas airmail, $17.50 per year additional.)

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Zip

House Committee Seeks Boost for Agriculture Research

A major shake-up of the US Department of Agriculture's scientific bureaucracy and a hefty financial shot in the arm for agricultural research have been proposed in a bill sponsored by almost the entire membership of the House Agriculture Committee.

The bill, written by Rep. William C. Wampler, of Virginia, ranking Republican on the committee, and co-sponsored by 20 other members, including Chairman Thomas S. Foley (D-Wash.), would elevate science in the USDA bureaucracy by creating the post of Assistant Secretary for Research. It would also establish a top-level committee to help plan agricultural research policy, and set up a new system of grants for basic scientific studies.

The committee has scheduled hearings on the measure for February 17 and 18, and swift action is anticipated.

Virtually all the bill's major provisions are taken straight from a recent report by a committee of the National Academy of Sciences which made some scathing remarks about agricultural research policy (SGR Vol V., No. 21). Since that report was prepared with the help of consultants from the USDA, and since the House Agriculture Committee rarely puts itself in direct opposition to the policies of the Department it is supposed to watch over, it can be assumed that the bill at least has USDA's tacit support.

If it is enacted in roughly its present form, the bill could lead to some radical changes in the traditional system of agricultural research management, much of which dates back to laws passed by Congress in the 1880s.

The proposal that there should be an assistant USDA secretary concerned solely with research carries the implicit suggestion that the present Assistant Secretary for Conservation, Research and Education, Robert W. Long, should be relieved of his research responsibilities. Long, a former vice president of the Bank of America, has drawn criticism from the research community for failing to come to grips with problems afflicting the agricultural research system.

As for the proposal that a top-level policy committee be established, the idea is that it would consist of representatives from several government agencies which fund agricultural research, together with people from farming, research and consumer organizations. The intent is to provide better coordination of the federal government's agricultural research support, and there is even an explicit recommendation that somebody from the Academy's Board of Agriculture and Renewable Resources, which wrote the report, should be a member.

The provision in the bill calling for a new system of competitive grants for basic research would represent a significant departure from the present system, in which the bulk of agricultural research is supported through block grants to agricultural experiment stations. A competitive grant mechanism has long been advocated as a means of increasing the quality of the agricultural research supported by USDA. The bill would authorize $50 million in FY 1977, $100 million in FY 1978 and $250 million in FY 1979 for such grants.

Finally, the bill contains a provision expressing the "sense of Congress" that funding for existing agricultural research should be increased by $250 million immediately. That figure is close to the amount recommended by the Academy committee to restore agricultural research support to its 1966 level.

Science & Government Report
Northwest Station
Box 6226A
Washington, D.C. 20015

Second class postage paid
at Washington, D.C.

Xerox Univ. Microfilms
300 North Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, Mich 48106